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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/RA, DRL AND G/TIP

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [SMIG](#) [ELAB](#) [MU](#)  
SUBJECT: OMAN MOVING FORWARD AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

REF: A. MUSCAT 576  
[1](#)B. MUSCAT 500

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Despite the absence of many senior officials and the slow pace of the Omani bureaucracy during the hot summer months, the government has demonstrated over the past 90 days its commitment to take new measures against trafficking-in-persons (TIP). As reported previously, on July 1 the Ministry of Manpower (MoM) issued comprehensive new occupational health and safety regulations vetted by the International Labor Organization in a move directly related to combating TIP in Oman (ref B). By adopting international standards for both work-sites and company-owned residential facilities, the MoM hopes to prevent abusive working conditions often associated with labor exploitation and trafficking.

[1](#)2. (C) In a follow-up move to improve capacity for the enforcement of labor regulations, the MoM announced publicly on August 6 that it had begun recruiting 94 new labor inspectors - 82 men and 12 women - as part of a drive to strengthen adherence to Omani labor laws. The new inspectors are required to meet relatively high standards, including possession of a higher education degree and fluency in English. In addition, the MoM plans to hire seven "legal researchers" to help handle legal issues and questions concerning labor regulations. Khalid Jardani, Office Director for Minister of Manpower Juma bin Ali bin Juma, told Pol-Econ Chief on August 17 that the hiring of the new inspectors was well underway and represented a renewed government emphasis on protecting worker rights. "Other ministries may be asleep in the summer, but we're taking action now," Jardani stated.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Accompanying these measures have been unusually candid public statements by Omani officials against practices leading to the abuse and exploitation of foreign workers. During an August 9 meeting with representatives of labor recruitment firms that bring expatriate workers to Oman, the Under Secretary of Labor at the MoM emphasized that foreign laborers must regularly receive their full salaries and be provided with appropriate healthcare and accommodations. He criticized the "poor performance" and high fees imposed by some recruitment companies and promised increased inspections of their recruitment practices and procedures. On August 16, private Arabic-language daily "al-Shabiba" ran an article on run-away domestic workers that included statements by Mohammed Ahmad al-Rawahi, the MoM Deputy Director General of Labor Care. Rather than point the finger at the workers themselves, as some employers quoted in the article tried to do, Rawahi stated that most of the cases investigated by the MoM were the fault of the sponsors. He acknowledged that many sponsors of the run-away workers did not abide by their legal obligations and committed violations such as failing to timely pay salaries, withholding of wages to force employees to pay the cost of bringing them to Oman, and committing

physical abuse.

¶4. (C) Comment: Reflecting the MFA Secretary General's recognition that Oman will have to take substantive anti-TIP measures to reciprocate its move from Tier 3 to Tier 2 Watch List (ref A), the MoM's recent steps, albeit modest, demonstrate that the government is committed to moving forward against TIP. The announcement during the two most languid months of the year of new labor regulations and a beefed-up inspection effort shows a resolve to act sooner, rather than later. Moreover, the uncharacteristically blunt statements by MoM officials, who in the past have normally refrained from criticizing employers in labor disputes, may indicate a willingness to adopt a stricter public stance against Omanis who contribute to TIP. End Comment.  
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